

LA VOCE DI GCICS

GULF COAST ITALIAN CULTURE SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. BOX 2591, SARASOTA, FL. 34230

WWW.GCICS.ORG

February 2021



President's Message from Julie Bondarenko

What a month...good and bad... "Ahh! 2021 is finally here. We waited anxiously for its beginning...What a relief!" Is that what I said? I could see the light, but we had to navigate a dark tunnel before we could view the sunlight. In essence, it is the completion of a hope. Sadly, we witnessed our country torn apart by the attack on the U.S. Capitol. It does not matter which side of the aisle you 'sit on'. Our democracy is, and always will be, paramount to our success. For our membership I wish us all calm, and always remember what is useful for us. It is love and concern for all our members and their families. We have the same goals which recognize our love of family, love of country, and love for our/or the Italian heritage we have all come to understand and learn about. Ultimately this is what we have developed great

affection for. We are bonded to one another because of our Society and our beliefs. It is our beliefs that define the character and goodness of one another and not politics.

COVID-19: Some have received their first vaccine and I congratulate you on your success. Most of us have managed to register and are awaiting the phone call-come and get your vaccine. My number is 62,265. I have a feeling it will be April or May before I receive that most welcomed phone call. I thought it would move more quickly. You have undoubtedly heard that we do not have enough vaccines to go around, and all the paraphernalia needed to go with it. I am very hopeful we will have a turn around with

the necessary vaccines and organizational skills to bring on its success. I will be patient for as long as it takes. I do not have a choice. Let us pray!

ANNUAL MEETING: We had a successful virtual Annual Meeting on January 22nd. I wish to give all who attended, our Board and members, huge applause. I also want to applaud Robert Gaglio, a GCICS member and his guest artist, Joy Leitner. Joy, an accomplished operetta performer, graced us with several songs. The songs she selected showcased her talents. Robert is fortunate to have an affiliation with such a beautiful young singer. I want to share Robert's website: www.italianculinarytours.com Tours are not possible at present, so Robert is currently offering classes at ACE-Adult and Community Enrichment. These classes are given by Robert and knowledgeable tour guides. As a show of appreciation for these guides, their expert knowledge and given their current inability to avert this pandemic, Robert has agreed that any speaking fees he receives would go to these guides. Robert, we are extremely grateful for your participation. I have only received great reviews about his Italian tours. One more note--Robert will cook, serve, and entertain you and your guests in your home. What a treat! Robert's contact information is: Robert Gaglio Italian Culinary Tours, P.O. Box 1543,

Holmes Beach FL 34218, (239) 223-4548.

Now back to business...GCICS's website. We were busy with the holidays. It appears now we can devote time to this very needed transformation of our site. We will keep you posted on its progress. Look for Ellen Roderick's report on our Jan 26th Social Hour, "A Favorite Italian Dish". I heard it was the best.

Just one more note. Linda Ahern (Scholarship Chair) is recovering from knee surgery. For those who have experienced this, I am certain you can understand her 'pain'. We will keep you posted on her progress. Her doctors are hopeful she can get back on the golf course by mid-summer. Let us keep her in our thoughts. Scholarship applications are arriving. We look forward to meeting those students whom we decide to interview.

I wish to thank Board members who contribute above and beyond--Jerry for always being available to Zoom us; George for your dedication to our cultural events; Mary for the great newsletters; Penny for keeping us financially sound; and Ellen for making it all happen. And thanks to the remainder of the Board for without whom we would not have members or our Society. Continue to stay safe, be ever grateful for our beautiful country, and, above all, find the humanity in one another

"DATELINE PASCO COUNTY, FL: SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2021, 12:51 PM"
Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

When your cell phone rings at 7:27 am on New Year's Day, it alarms you a bit. The caller was my brother Jack who lives in Tampa, FL. He had found online some appointments in Pasco County (4 counties north of Sarasota County) that would be available online at 8:00 am Jan. 1, 2021 to make a reservation for a COVID vaccine shot. At precisely 8:00 am, we were both ready to click on the "register" button. The demand has been huge in FL to secure an appointment for the vaccine since all 65+ persons are now eligible in FL for the vaccine. I secured a spot for 1:00 pm on Jan. 3; my brother did not secure a spot. (Note: On Monday, he did secure a spot for Tues, Jan 5 and he now has injection 1 of the Moderna vaccine as I do.)

I want to share what went through my mind as I waited in line (for only 15 minutes) in a drive-thru set up at a closed Sears parking lot in Pasco County, two hours from my condo in Sarasota. What came rushing into my head were vaccines I received earlier in my life to protect me from disease/viruses. I recall my parents taking my sister, brother, and me to the dispensary in the Navy Department buildings on Constitution Ave, Washington, DC to receive the Salk vaccine in 1955 for polio. I thought about the visit to Bethesda (MD) Naval Hospital in 1961 to receive the Sabin Sugar Cube to reinforce the Salk vaccine. I recalled going to Woodlin Elementary School, Georgia Ave, Silver Spring, MD in the fall of 1976 to secure the swine flu vaccine (25% of Americans received the vaccine before it was halted after 10 weeks).



As the health professional injected me (12:51 pm), I was overcome with tears of JOY and SOME RELIEF. In my mind, I quietly thanked the scientists, medical professionals, epidemiologists, and all support staff who created the vaccines. I thought about those around the world who stepped up to test the vaccines—how brave they were. As I waited in my car for 15 minutes (observed by the National Guard to make certain I had no negative reaction), I thought about all the lives that have been lost to COVID-19. And my heart ached because my close friend and MD Beta Alpha Delta Kappa colleague, Jennie Azhderian, died of COVID-19 on Sept 18, 2020 in a Richmond, VA hospital. And I

thought about the dedicated medical teams that face this deadly virus every day including my dear nephew who is an Emergency Medicine doctor at Georgetown University Hospital in DC.

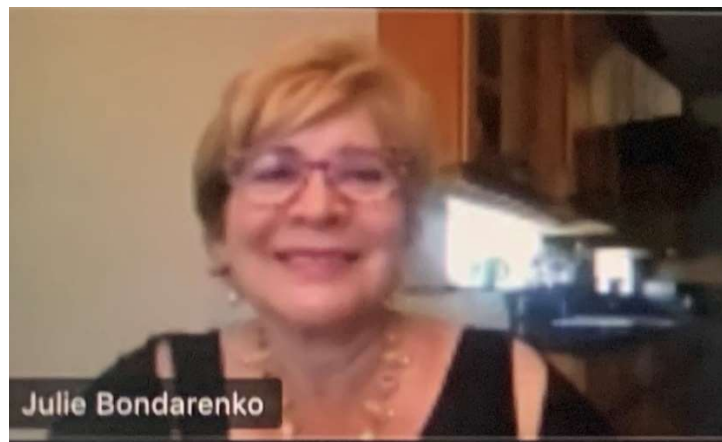
Finally, when I experience a historic day in my life, which I consider January 3, 2021 to be, I think back to where I was or what I was doing exactly one year ago and say to myself "there is no way I could have predicted on January 3, 2020 that I would be in a parking lot in Pasco County, FL receiving a Moderna vaccine for COVID-19. And what was I doing on January 3, 2020? It was a Friday, and I was released from 24 days of residential rehab after fracturing my hip on 12/7/19. My sister, Joan, brought me to my Silver Spring, MD home. She and my neighbor Ed Davis helped me up the steps (since I was using a walker) and I faced a new challenge of managing on my own after being taken care of 100% from the day I went to the ER at Holy Cross Hospital on Dec 7th. That afternoon my dear friend, Pat Myers, came by to check on me as did Adama and Musu (my mom's health care aides from 2001-2006). My groceries were delivered by Giant Peapod for the first time. And then Joan went home and there I was to manage on my own with a walker – it was kind of frightening, but I said to myself "you have to do it. You cannot let this fracture rule your life."

And so, the journey to avoid the virus continues from March 13, 2020 when we locked down in MD to now and then to 1/31/21 when I will receive the 2nd injection. I will continue to wear my mask, social distance, and not socialize until herd immunity is achieved in this country. I am so grateful for the vaccine. My hope is that you will receive the vaccine soon. January 3, 2021 was a grand day in my life, and I hope the day you receive your vaccine will be grand for you as well.

GCICS VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING: 1/22/21

Article & Photos: Dr. Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

BUSINESS MEETING: President Julie Bondarenko called the virtual meeting to order at 2:00 pm. There were 34 GCICS members in attendance.





Some members who were in attendance

Julie provided a warm welcome and then introduced Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary. Ellen gave brief remarks about two faithful GCICS members, Paula Holleran and Bob Menegaz, who passed away during 2020. Photos of Paula and Bob, with their spouses, were shown on the screen. Ellen asked for a moment of silent prayer in their memory.

Julie asked Board members to introduce themselves, sharing their role on the Board. There were no GCICS past presidents in attendance. She thanked the Board for their dedicated service. She asked new members to introduce themselves. Janet Deangelo, who joined in 2019 but had not been able to participate in any functions to date, introduced herself. Julie provided remarks about the organization starting first with 2020 in-person events (e.g., Annual Meeting, Italian Film Matinee, Mardi Gras Celebration, St. Joseph's Luncheon, La Cena's, Dinner Cruise); and then reviewed the Society's move to virtual events: cultural lectures, social hours, basket auction, and language classes. She then addressed membership: 137 with 5 new members joining since late summer into fall. Next, she spoke about the re-design of the GCICS website. Finally, Julie spoke about the GCICS Scholarship Program, thanking members for their generosity both during the Giving Challenge and donations sent with membership renewals.

One piece of official business was then handled. Tom Hurban moved and Linda Mercurio seconded the following motion: *That three (3) GCICS Board members be re-elected as Directors for a second 3-year term, effective immediately: George Arfield, Nancy Schubert, and Penny Thomas.* The motion passed unanimously.

ENTERTAINMENT



Julie introduced Robert Gaglio who then introduced our entertainment. He introduced Joy Leitner, Soprano, to perform some musical selections of her choice. She began by stating that she would perform 3 selections (an old piece, a romantic piece, and a new piece). She introduced and performed each of the following:

- (1) “Se tu m’ami” (“If you love me”) by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (early 18th century Baroque Italian aria)
- (2) “O Mio Babbino Caro” (“Oh My Dear Papa”) by Giacomo Puccini (Aria from one-act opera *Gianni Schicchi*, 1918)
- (3) “Nella Fantasia” (“In My Fantasy”) by composer Ennio Morricone and lyricist Chiara Ferrau (from the film *The Mission*, 1986); Joy called it a “poem of hope”. Words are in the text boxes below.

Italian

Nella fantasia io vedo mondo giusto,
Li tutti vivono in pace e in onesta.
Lo sogno d’anime che sono sempre
libre,
Come le nuvole che volano
Pien’ d’unmanita in ondo all

Nella fantasia io vedo un mondo
chiaro,
Li anche la notte e meno oscura.
Io sogno d’anime che sono
Sempre libere,
Come le nuvole
che volano pien’ d’unmanita

Nella fantasia esieste un vento caldo
Che soffia sulle citta
Il sogno d’anime che sono
sempre libere
Come le nuove che volano
Pien’ d’umanita
In fondo all’anima

English Translation

In my fantasy I see a just world,
Where everyone lives in peace and
honesty.
I dream of souls that are always free
Like the clouds that float
Full of humanity in the depths of the
soul.

In my fantasy I see a bright world
Where each night there is less
darkness
I dream of sprits that are always free
Like clouds that float full of humanity

In my fantasy exists a warm wind that
blows into the city
I dream of souls that are always free,
Like clouds that float
Full of humanity in the depths of the
soul

Robert thanked Joy for her grand performance with rounds of applause by the attendees. Robert spoke about his Culinary Tours that are for the most part on hold. He also spoke about the classes he conducts for various Sarasota organizations.

TOWN HALL



Julie asked Ellen to take a few minutes to lead a discussion with members to secure their input. Ellen conducted a feedback session, raising key questions: (1) How are members managing under this time of COVID? Members are striving to stay safe right now. One member spoke about catching the virus and encouraged members to take every precaution. (2) Who has had access to the vaccine so far? Only one member had received the vaccine and that is because she traveled to Pasco County. Some members are registered in both Sarasota and Manatee counties at present. (3) Are there thoughts on virtual programs we should be planning? George Arfield, Social and Cultural Chair, has established a program for Feb 4, 2021 related to Italian films and to be facilitated by Dr. Scott Perry. Ellen will announce it this weekend. Joan Ferrante suggested that we ask 2020 Scholarship recipients to tape a message of what their first year of study has been like; and that we show the videos during our virtual Scholarship Celebration in April 2021. (4) Thoughts on lack of virtual participation by many faithful members. Many members felt that those not participating may be zoomed-out after several months. (5) Need for Zoom training? Some members believe that some not participating do not have Zoom skills. It was decided that Ellen will announce right up front the availability of Jerry Hall to assist those who have not used zoom.

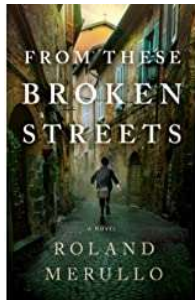
CLOSING: Julie thanked Joy and Robert for this terrific and uplifting interlude in our Annual Meeting. She then thanked the Board for all their work and faithfulness during this difficult time; and she thanked the members for being so faithful. She reminded them that we have a Social Hour scheduled for Jan 26 (Tuesday) and to contact Ellen if they wish to participate (we still have space available). She closed with wishing members good health. Adjournment was at 3:40 pm.



ITALIAN BOOK SHELF

BY LEITA DAVIS

From These Broken Streets by Roland Merullo
Lake Union Publishing, 2020, 248 pages



Roland Merullo is a prolific writer with twenty-four published books, plus articles in prestigious magazines, varying in subject matter from his Italian heritage, (*Revere Beach Elegy*) to Buddhism (*Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner with the Buddha*) to golfing (*Passion for Golf*). His web site and videos offers a journey through his boundless imagination.

From These Broken Streets is a novel based on the real events in Naples in 1943 – the “Four Days of Naples” -- when citizens revolted against the Nazi occupiers, counting on the imminent intervention of the Allies who were moving through Sicily up the Mediterranean coast. Their courage arose from a sense of exhaustion and rage at the murders, rapes and destruction the Nazis had been perpetrating in their city for too long. *Basta!* Now they rose up “...to save their men and their Jewish friends from the work camps, their neighbors from execution, their city from destruction, or they were going to die trying.”

Giuseppe DiPietra, a curator in the National Archives, drew a map of the city indicating every block and building the Nazis occupied which he planned to give to the Allies. If he’s discovered, he will face forced labor or swift execution. Merullo’s description of Naples is as intricate as any map. Lucia Pastone, secretary for the Italian Fascist government, and Giuseppe’s lover, risks her life to gather secret information about Fascist plans to destroy Naples. Lucia’s father, Aldo, is a *Camorrista* who draws Giuseppe and Lucia into the underworld whose bosses collaborate in the resistance. Aldo’s lover, Rita, a prostitute, had “seen and experienced things that would have sickened or destroyed most people. “... but she’d found that helping and giving were the perfect antidotes to hopelessness.” Rita befriends Armando, a boy of the streets, a *scugnizzo*, of which there were many, whose gang stealthily sabotaged Fascist vehicles and supplies, and faced their guns at the ultimate showdown between the protagonists and cornered Nazis.

Merullo writes this saga with passion. “Ordinary people fighting Nazi soldiers in the streets, throwing rocks, firing stolen rifles and machine guns, tossing homemade hand grenades, dropping furniture out of apartment windows into the narrow street so tanks couldn’t reach certain neighborhoods.” They forced the Germans to abandon their city in haste.

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Past Presidents

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
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| Gabriella Thurston | 1993-2001 |
| Patrick Corsentino | 2001-2004 |
| Arthur Castraberti | 2004-2006 |
| Marie Corsentino | 2007 |
| Mary Amabile Palmer | 2008-2010 |
| William Korp | 2010-2014 |
| Anthony Esposito | 2015-2016 |
| Sheryl Lazzarotti | 2016-2020 |

GCICS VIRTUAL SOCIAL HOUR – January 26, 2021

Ellen Roderick, GCICS Secretary

For our 6th virtual Social Hour, thirteen talented GCICS cooks shared **favorite Italian dishes**, some passed down from grandparents. We had 4 “First Timers”: Noni & Vern St. Amand, Paola Tate, and Mary Lou Ferrari. Thank you, **Judy Herman**, for your wonderful facilitating. To quote one attendee: “What an enjoyable time today”. Mary Rinaldi and I will be working on a SPECIAL EDITION of “La Voce di GCICS” that will be issued in mid Feb after we secure all of the recipes shared during the Social Hour. I will write an article, we will include photos of the presenters and the food as well as the RECIPES. Finally, we are scheduling a Feb. Social Hour; Gordon Bloom will facilitate; the date is February 25th and we will soon announce the topic (always 5-6 pm). So be on the lookout for a special Culinary Issue.